

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY

Independent, locally owned and operated!

26,000 copies delivered biweekly to Lamorinda homes & businesses

26,000 FREE copies [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) 925-377-0977



MOFD conducts wildland training exercises at Painted Rock in June.

Photo courtesy MOFD

## High fire danger prompts new MOFD ordinance

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District bolstered its aggressive fire prevention program and took a major, unprecedented step to help reduce fire risk by passing a local ordinance banning open burning and recreational fires during periods of high fire danger.

“Every year, open burning, campfires, bonfires and recreational fires escape control and require an emergency response from fire agencies,” Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs wrote in a staff report. “By restricting the time of year that open burning is allowed, we can reduce the threat to our community posed

by uncontrolled wildfire.”

The 2020 fire season is off to an ominous start. A 2-acre grass fire east of the Highway 24 Wilder off-ramp June 11 required a second alarm fire response. Over the Independence Day weekend, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District responded to 80 vegetation fires and 13 structure fires. And the following week, the spread of a vegetation fire in Moraga was slowed by previously completed fuel mitigation efforts.

Historically, the worst is on the way. Which is why the district board passed an urgency ordinance at its July 15 meeting to ban open burning and recreational fires during periods of high fire danger,

which the district considers as running from late July until the fall rains arrive.

“After attempts at education, the penalty will be \$500 for each day of violation,” Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said.

The prohibition does not apply to manufactured products such as gas barbecues or fire pits that comply with the district fire code, or to campfires on private lands with an MOFD-issued fire permit. Enclosed barbecues do not produce embers, the chief said, and flying embers are a major problem during periods of high fire danger.

The ordinance takes effect Aug. 15.

Advertising

<b>LAMORINDA WEEKLY</b>	
Letters to the Editor	A9
How to contact us	B4
Community Service	B3
Obituaries	B3
Classified	C1
Shop Moraga	C2



BARBARA
BRAWNER

PRESENTS

20 Robert Road, Orinda | \$1,675,000

4 Bedroom | 2 Bath | 2,397 Sq Ft | .33 acre

Barbara Brawner JD | Realtor | 925.212.7672 | Barb@BarbBrawner.com | DRE 01922264

COMPASS

## Schools to reopen online; different hybrid models may follow

By Sophie Braccini

The recent spike of COVID-19 cases in Contra Costa County spurred many school districts to make the decision to reopen remotely, even before Gov. Gavin Newsom’s July 17 mandate was given to do so. Each of the four Lamorinda school districts have developed their own hybrid models for opening if the requisite reduction in infections in the county holds for a consecutive 14 days, and other factors trend positively.

The governor gave school districts the guidance they had all been asking for: as long as a county is on the state’s watch list, schools in that county won’t be permitted to reopen classrooms.

The Acalanes Union High School District made the decision July 14 to start the year online, and the Lafayette School District made the same decision July 15 on a split vote. Orinda Union School District on July 13 had decided to reopen using different hybrid models for elementary and middle school students, and during its study session on July 16 the Moraga School District was leaning toward distance learning.

Numerous parents at these meetings supported the idea of a hybrid model as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for the wellness of the children, and the federal recommendation to do so for economic reasons. Working parents stressed that they had to return to work and that finding supervision for their children would be difficult. Many also noted that most students did not learn efficiently

during the spring quarter, were depressed and demotivated.

But as superintendents and the governor noted, safety for children and staff comes first. When the Moraga School District polled its teaching staff, nearly 60% said they were ready to return to teaching in a hybrid model. Others either did not want to or could not return to campus. All districts noted that the need for additional substitute teachers would be a great concern with a hybrid model.

All the districts stressed the fact that online learning this time around will not be the same as what happen in the spring when staff had to pivot within a few days. They acknowledged that the spring had been far from optimal. This time would be different, they promised.

The tasks forces that have worked during the summer have chosen new models that will guarantee, according to them, the robust educational experience the governor is asking for.

Aida Glimme, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services at the AUHSD, explained that the district will comply with Bill 98 that requires that attendance be taken by teachers every day, that procedures be set in place if students are absent for more than 60% of instruction per week, and that live interaction (synchronous education) with teachers happen daily.

All districts also offer families the option of choosing the online platform FuelEd if they want to

keep their children off-site for a whole semester. That system offers a full integrated platform and teachers can personalize the content depending on their pedagogy.

The districts have worked hard at defining a hybrid model that can maximize instructional hours and minimize exposure of teachers, especially in middle and high school. At the beginning of the summer there were promises that the schedules would align among districts to make the life of families with children of different ages easier; but in the end, everyone claimed to have found the best solution for their stakeholders and they are all different from one another.

For all the high schools Monday will be a day of online learning for the students, and their teachers will have an afternoon of professional development. For the rest of the week, the periods will be shortened to one hour and 25 minutes with 15 minutes between classes to clean up and move. Students will be organized into two groups A and B - most likely alphabetically. Group A will attend class in person on Tuesday and Thursday and be online Wednesday and Friday. The opposite will be true for group B. The distance learning schedule will mirror this blended model, with shorter periods: one hour only, and Monday dedicated to asynchronous learning for students and development for teachers.

... continued on Page A9

<b>Civic News</b> A1-A10	<b>Life in Lamorinda</b> B1-B4	<b>Sports</b> C1-C2	<b>Our Homes</b> D1-D12
Planning Commission approves memory care facility - Page A6	PPP loans keeping retailers afloat ... for now - Page B1	Ron Kroichick on what it takes to be a sports writer - Page C1	Enjoy a backyard bounty of fruits and berries - Page D1

